



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



# SUCCESS STORY

## Adults Benefit from Adult-Child Communication Sessions

**Adults reduce girls' risk of HIV by improving their relationships with youth.**



Hilary M. Schwandt

*Dickson is one of the many adults who have reported improved communications and relationships with their children after attending Adult-Child Communication sessions.*

**Build strong girls and strong communities worldwide with the Go Girls! Toolkit, available March 2011. For more information, e-mail [ghcommunicationsteam@usaid.gov](mailto:ghcommunicationsteam@usaid.gov), or contact Dr. Carol Underwood, Project Director of Go Girls!, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Center for Communication Programs at [cunderwo@jhuccp.org](mailto:cunderwo@jhuccp.org) or tel.: 410-659-6300.**

Research in Botswana, Malawi, and Mozambique has confirmed a finding of the literature on positive adolescent health: The vulnerability of girls to HIV can be influenced by the quality of their relationships with adults. Conflicts between traditional and modern viewpoints, the failure of adults to supervise their children, and the lack of positive adult role models – all of which were identified as problems in the three countries – can damage the quality of adult-child relationships.

Funded by the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief through the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Go Girls! Initiative (Go Girls!) addressed the vulnerability of girls to HIV infection in Botswana, Malawi, and Mozambique with a unique, multilevel program. One program component, Adult-Child Communication, responded to the research findings in these countries by equipping adults with skills in positive role-modeling as well as in communicating and building relationships with youth. Acquiring these skills has enabled adults to engage in nurturing, supportive relationships with young people.

Adults who participated in the training groups in Mozambique now understand that their own attitudes and behaviors shape those of children. They also have new appreciation for the power of respect. By making a conscious effort to show children respect, adults lay the foundation for open and trusting communications with children about HIV risk and prevention.

In Botswana, a female participant said, "This program has helped me build a better relationship with my children. I used to be very strict with my children – I would beat them or yell at them. I attended the Go Girls! Adult-Child Communication program and now I can sit with them and tell them that I love them. I can give them advice without beating them or yelling at them."

In Malawi, men are often reluctant to talk with their adolescent daughters because such communication is suspected of being sexually motivated. The fear of this kind of suspicion can lead fathers to withdraw from their daughters. Dickson, from Malawi, is a parent of two children, a boy and a girl. After participating in the Go Girls! Adult-Child Communication sessions, he said, "At first, it was difficult for me to talk to my daughter – I could only discuss sensitive issues with my son. Now, I am able to talk freely with my daughter, and my wife is now able to talk to my son. All of this is possible because of the Go Girls! Initiative."